

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FORMER FINANCE MINISTER TURNER ON BILINGUALISM AND FEDERALISM

1. "EXCESSIVE EMPHASIS HAS BEEN PLACED UPON BILINGUALISM AS THE SOLE PREREQUISITE TO NATIONAL UNITY" SAID FORMER FINANCE MINISTER JOHN TURNER IN A SPEECH TO THE CANADIAN CLUB IN TORONTO OCTOBER 25. SUCH EMPHASIS FAILS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ISSUES PERCEIVED BY BOTH WESTERN CANADA (RESOURCE OWNERSHIP, TRANSPORTATION AND TARIFF STRUCTURE) AND ATLANTIC CANADA (EQUALITY OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY) AS BEING JUST AS IMPORTANT TO NATIONAL HARMONY AS THE LANGUAGE ISSUE.

2. NEVERTHELESS, MOST OF TURNER'S SPEECH FOCUSED ON THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM. POINTING OUT THAT HE WAS ATTORNEY GENERAL IN 1969 WHEN THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT WAS PASSED, TURNER POINTED OUT THAT THE ACT ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONAL BILINGUALISM AS A MEANS OF PROTECTING THE LANGUAGE RIGHTS OF THOSE DESIRING TO REMAIN UNILINGUAL, I.E. THAT ANY CANADIAN HAS THE RIGHT TO DEAL WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS AGENCIES IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE.

3. ACCORDING TO TURNER, SEVERAL THINGS WENT WRONG: (A) THE PROGRAM WAS NOT PROPERLY EXPLAINED TO THE PUBLIC; (B) FRUITLESS EFFORTS WERE MADE TO TRANSFORM THE LINGUISTIC CAPABILITIES OF THE FEDERAL CIVIL SERVICE OVERNIGHT, RATHER THAN DIRECTING THE IMPETUS OF THE PROGRAM TOWARD THE NEXT GENERATION (NOW ACKNOWLEDGED UNCLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED

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AS GOVERNMENT POLICY IN THE RECENT SPEECH FROM THE THRONE); (C) TOO MANY FEDERAL POSITIONS WERE DESIGNATED AS BILINGUAL; (D)

TOO MUCH EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON MAKING OCCUPANTS OF BILINGUAL-
DESIGNATED POSITIONS ACTIVELY BILINGUAL, WHEN IN MANY CASES PASSIVE
BILINGUALISM WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT; AND (E) "THE LACK OF
RESPONSE FOR SO LONG BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO (QUEBEC'S) BILL
22 HAS PLACED THE CREDIBILITY OF ITS OWN BILINGUA PROGRAMIN JEOPARDY
ACROSS THE COUNTRY".

4. ADDRESSING CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS, TURNER SAID HE
FAVORED "PATRIATION" OF THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN ACT, BUT
"COULD NOT SUBSCRIBE TO ANY UNILATERAL PATRIATION OF THAT CONSTITU-
TION WITHOUT AN AMENDING FORMULA AGREED UPON FIRST BY THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT AND THE PROVINCES." AMENDMENTS MAY BE NECESSARY, FOR
ONTARIO UP TO NOW HAS BEEN THE MAIN BENEFICIARY OF CONFEDERATION,
AND PERHAPS DE-CENTRALIZATION OF ITS INFLUENCE IS REQUIRED. "WE
NEED TO RECONCILE THE LEGITIMATE PRIORITYS OF EVERY REGION."

5. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, TURNER WAS RECEIVED ENTHUSIAS-
TICALLY BY AUDIENCE OF 1500, BUT REACTION TO SPEECH WAS
LUKEWARM.
DIGGINS

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